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CIA seeking recruits in Hub police

Other cities also contacted

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The Central Intelligence Agency is recruiting Boston police officers to serve as temporary agents, mainly to gather intelligence against terrorists abroad, Boston police officials said yesterday.

Police officials issued a statement saying they "would not discourage any individuals seeking to apply to the CIA."

Boston is one of 18 major police departments that had been asked to cooperate in a recruiting effort by the CIA. New York City has agreed to make officers available for temporary work, but Los Angeles and Houston officials have refused, the New York Times reported yesterday.

The contact between the CIA and the Boston Police Department is the first documented relations between the two agencies since the early 1970s.

Because the CIA is prohibited under its charter from exercising "police, subpoena or law enforcement powers or internal security functions," cooperation between the CIA and local police is an extremely controversial issue.

Civil libertarians argue that cooperation between the CIA and police departments greatly increases the risk of illegal domestic spying on political dissidents.

Mackie McLeod, communications director for the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, called the apparent cooperation between Boston police and the CIA "disturbing."

"The Civil Liberties Union naturally has an abiding interest in the unbridled growth of secret government," McLeod said.

Boston Police Commissioner Francis M. Roache yesterday referred all questions about the issue to Superintendent John A. Gifford, who last July was among officials who attended an intelligence seminar on terrorism sponsored by the FBI and CIA.

Gifford issued a statement saying: "In July of this year, the CIA brought together law enforcement officials from major police departments across the country to explain the problem of international terrorism and to ask for guidance and recommendations on how to attract individuals with backgrounds in law enforcement skills into the CIA. The Boston police commissioner would not discourage any individual seeking to apply to the CIA."

However, Gifford could not be reached for an interview, and it was unclear whether any officers have expressed an interest. Katherine Pherson, a CIA spokeswoman, declined to say whether any Boston officers plan to or have already taken an entrance examination, the initial step in a screening process.

Pherson downplayed the media attention generated by the Times article, saying CIA recruiters "are looking for people to stay on permanently."

But George V. Lauder, the CIA's chief spokesman, said, "We want people for a minimum of three years, and if they want to come on for three years, that's great."

In the early 1970s, there was congressional criticism of the CIA providing technical and training assistance to local police departments. Critics charge the CIA was illegally trading information with police, a charge the CIA continually denied.

However, documents released in the last three years under the Freedom of Information Act, some of which have been obtained by the Globe, indicate the CIA actively courted major police departments, especially those in New York, Chicago, and Boston.

Former Boston police commissioner Edmund L. McNamara attended police seminars at CIA headquarters in October 1967 and May 1970, and visited the CIA again in April 1971 to attend an explosives demonstration.

A May 3, 1971, letter from McNamara to CIA security head Howard J. Osborn said, "The explosive residue detection technique looks very promising, and we are grateful for your assistance to the Boston Police Department in these matters."

The documents show Boston was also one of 35 police departments - the only one in New England - to receive a briefing in the early 1970s about a trace metal detection technique developed by the CIA. According to CIA memos obtained by the Globe, the briefing was given by CIA agents "posing as (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) consultants."

Some of the documents reveal that the CIA did not want its rela-

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tionship with local police departments a public one.

A May 4, 1970, memorandum from Osborn to a CIA deputy director said: "It is our desire to remain completely anonymous in terms of our support to their various departments. Considering the year facing us and the potential difficulties arising if the various dissident groups focus on the Agency, I believe that the idea of a local police seminar is a highly desirable one."

McNamara was the only police commissioner from a major city to attend the 1970 seminar. The others were from smaller departments surrounding the District of Columbia.